

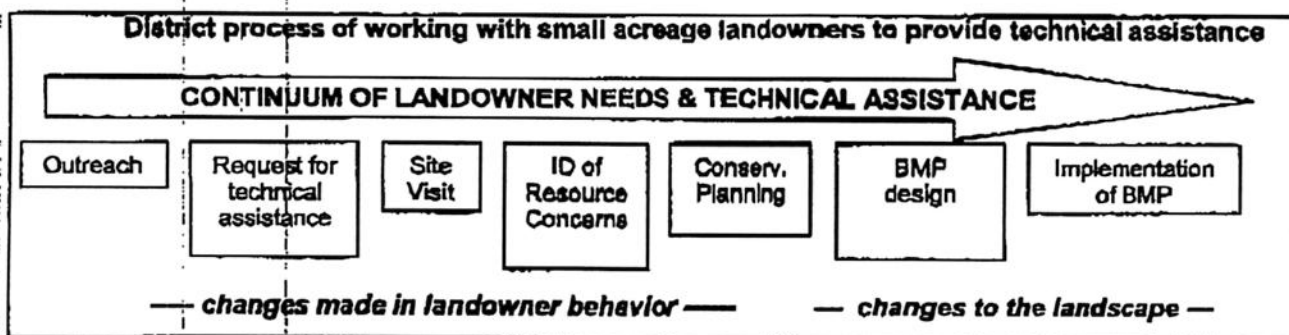
ABSTRACT TITLE: "IT AIN'T THE FISH...IT'S THE PEOPLE"

Water quality is not just about fish...it's about understanding people and human behavior. We are given fancy job titles such as Conservation Specialist, Water Quality Planner or Natural Resource Manager, but in reality, we are People Managers, first and foremost. As such, we can't manage natural resources if we can't manage people. Improving water quality and watershed health can best occur by affecting changes in landowner behavior that will result in positive changes to the landscape itself through implementation of best management practices.

Our agricultural lands in Clackamas County rank second in the state in gross farm sales and support intensive and diverse operations including nursery stock, Christmas tree production, timber, farm crops berries and grass seed, numerous small farm enterprises, livestock and equine facilities. The increasing subdivision of large farms into small parcels is enabling many more people to experience rural living. Collectively, these landowners represent a major source of non-point source pollution and along with recreation, fishing and tourism, place increasing demands and pressures on streams and waterways, making water quality protection a critical component when managing for multiple uses.

Water quality problems are often exacerbated by livestock accessing streams, overgrazing, improper storage or distribution of manure, excessive application of chemicals, degraded riparian areas, and the unchecked spread of non-native vegetation that crowds out native species important for fish and wildlife habitat and erosion prevention. Although many landowners have a desire to improve aesthetics, the production of their land, save water, reduce their use of pesticides, and improve fish and wildlife habitat, they are much more likely to do so through a better understanding of agency processes, improved access to technical information and guidance for implementation.

Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) has developed a multi-phase approach to conservation planning and implementation. The District's Small Farm Program plays a crucial role in TMDL implementation by bridging the knowledge gap between the landowner and the agency regulators. This approach provides landowners with a partnership "buy in" to technical assistance to develop site-specific conservation plans and install conservation practices that assist in the implementation of State agricultural water quality management area plan goals and address local resource concerns.



The diversity of land uses and site specific resource concerns makes a quantitative estimate of improved water quality difficult. The District's Small Farm Program, can affect changes in landowner behavior and coupled with the implementation of best management practices (BMPs), intuitively suggests a net benefit in water quality will result. A cumulative effect on improved water quality may be determined through trend monitoring following significant BMP implementation.

The understanding of a problem is directly proportional to your distance from it. Clackamas SWCD plays a lead role in the locally led conservation process by working with landowners to meet their conservation objectives. One-on-one interaction with the Soil and Water Conservation District offers the landowner the information they need to change their behavior and take voluntary action to reduce their impacts to non-point source water pollution.

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